



POLICY	People, Partnership and Engagement		
PROCEDURE STATEMENT	Complaints Procedure – Clients and Community	EFFECTIVE DATE	7/07/2022
FUNCTION AREA	People, Partnership & Engagement	DOCUMENT REF	OP PPC 003
RESPONSIBILITY	Hut Executive Officer	VERSION NO.	V 03

Definitions

Complainant	The Person making a complaint.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made either orally or in writing about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by The Hut or its staff affecting the individual customer or groups of customers. This does not include an allegation of harm which should immediately be reported to the Executive Officer.
Informal complaints	A comment on an operational matter that may be readily resolved by a program co-ordinator or staff member of the program or service concerned.
Formal Complaint	A complaint where the complainant requests the issue to be referred to management or to the Board, or is a complaint complex in nature, relates to the conduct of, or decision made by, an employee or program coordinator.
Referred Complaint	A complaint that is escalated to the Executive Officer as it relates to Hut Policies, Procedures or safety of Hut staff, participants, clients or community or, one that cannot be resolved by the line manager/CDM. Either party may escalate the complaint to this level.
Staff	Paid employees and volunteers

Scope

Our Values outline how we behave and present to the community and underpin the way we work in community and deliver our services. These are in line with the HCSCC Charter, that outlines a list of customer /client rights.

This procedure is relevant for all community members, whether or not they access our services, activities or programs. It provides a procedure for an individual or group to make comment on areas of The Hut's services, programs and activity that may impact adversely on them or others or discriminate to restrict accessibility.

This procedure is to be followed for a complaint about our service or practice and not to be followed for allegations of abuse or harm or serious misconduct, all of which should immediately be reported to the Community Development Manager, Executive Officer or the Board Chair.

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that complaints will be responded to quickly and effectively, aiming to resolve any issues with a desired outcome or one that has an outcome that is suitable for both/all parties involved.

Information about how to make comment or a complaint will be easily accessible by all Service and Program Users and the general community. Copies will be available on The Hut's website www.thehut.org.au or at reception if a hard copy is requested.

For ease of access, these documents will also be made available in easy-to-read format.

Where a funding body requires a separate complaints process that is program specific Service and/or Program (e.g., for the No Interest Loan Scheme Service), users of this service will be advised.

Procedure

Staff who oversee programs or services will likely be the first port of call for a comment or complaint and will have a working knowledge of the Complaint Procedure relevant to their program. Any additional training on the process will occur as needed through team / program meetings. Gaps in knowledge may be identified on the job as well as through the performance review process.

Complaints are to be received positively with the mindset of continuous improvement. Staff will display empathy, listen to the complaint and be open to resolution.

In the face of threatening or abusive behaviour however, staff should not continue to try to resolve the complaint but seek aid and support from their line manager, CDM or EO.

Informal Complaints

A service or program user or community member may raise a concern with any member of The Hut staff, or with the CDM or EO in person or in writing.

Informal complaints can be managed at the first point of contact where the staff member is the Program Coordinator and the complaint can be easily managed with a quick resolution. The Program Coordinator will create an opportunity to listen and discuss the complaint in a confidential and neutral space.

1. If either the complainant or Program Coordinator believe the matter cannot be resolved immediately, the complaint is to be escalated to a 'referred complaint'. If the complaint is referred, the Program Coordinator will inform the complainant that their complaint is being referred to the Community Development Manager (CDM) or the Executive Officer (EO) for resolution and the reason for the escalation.
2. A complaint referred to the CDM or EO can either be done in person or via email. Documentation of the resolution process to date is to be provided by the Program Coordinator to the CDM or EO with any additional supporting evidence.
3. Meeting details will be confirmed with the complainant, in writing, as soon as practicable including the offer for a support person of their choice to attend at the meeting as a silent support (eg family member or interpreter).
4. At all stages of the resolution process, active listening skills will be used to identify the issue/ complaint with the aim of working with the complainant to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of both parties immediately.

Note: At any stage of the resolution process, the complainant can escalate the issue to a formal complaint. This can be done either in person to either the staff member addressing their initial complaint or the Executive Officer, or in writing direct to the Executive Officer.

Referred & Formal Complaints

If a formal complaint is expressed (in writing or in person) to a staff member, or if the staff member is referring an escalated complaint, the Staff member is to provide the complainant with a copy of the *Complaints and Comments Brochure* and inform them that the Complaints Policy and Procedure are both available on The Hut's website.

Formal complaints will be managed by the EO (or delegated to the CDM if applicable) or the Chair or Board, if in relation to the EO, in the first instance, and may involve the appointment of an independent complaints or grievance officer.

1. The complainant will be contacted within seven (7) days to arrange a face-to-face meeting with the EO or Board Chair with the intention of resolving the issue. The meeting will be held in a confidential environment within 15 working days from the receipt of the complaint.
2. Meeting details will be confirmed in writing with the complainant being advised that a support person of their choice (eg family member or interpreter) may attend at the meeting to provide support only (silent attendee). The complainant is also to be reminded that the meeting details and outcome are confidential and are not to be discussed outside of the meeting.
3. If the matter is still not resolved after the first meeting, or if more information needs to be gathered by the EO, the complainant is to be advised that an investigation into their complaint will occur. Investigation of the complaint may involve the Complaints Officer (EO or delegate) calling witnesses, requesting written reports or expert advice. This will be conducted, where possible, within 15 working days.
4. If the complaint is not resolved within 15 days, the complainant will be informed that the complaint is to be referred to the Chairperson, the Board Executive Committee and/or the Board, where a decision on how to progress.
5. A decision on how to progress or a decision around the initial complaint will be made within 15 working days and communicated to the complainant. The Board is to consider natural justice and assess any risks associated with preferred options and their ultimate decision for resolution.
6. All agreed actions at any stage of the resolution procedure will be formally documented with both parties receiving a copy. All documentation will be provided to the EO for recording and keeping on file securely in the Governance folder to ensure confidentiality.

Unresolved Complaints

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the EO or Board or if the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, either party have the right to involve an external agency such as the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) or the Adelaide Hills Council if it relates to a CHSP client.

A list of external mediation agencies is included on the Complaints and Comments Brochure.

Follow Up

The complainant will be informed of outcomes of the complaint and any changes to policy, procedures, services or programs as a result of their complaint in a timely manner. This is to be done in person for an informal complaint or in writing if the complaint is referred or formal.

Any agreed actions will be followed up by the staff member involved in the complaints process with outcomes being documented.

Records, Monitoring & Improvements

The EO will maintain the Complaints Register with all formal complaints and regularly monitor for ongoing trends and to inform continuous improvement activity.

All documentation relating to individual complaints will be securely kept in a file in The Hut's file management system in the Governance folder to maintain confidentiality.

Responsibilities

The EO is responsible for maintaining records of formal complaints and reporting outcomes to the Board.

<p><i>Related Documents</i></p>	<p>People, Partnership and Engagement Policy Comments and Complaints Brochure Service & Program User Rights & Responsibilities Handout Complaints Form Complaints Register Complaints Policy – Client & Community</p>
<p>Legislation & References</p>	<p>Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (South Australia) Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004 Disability Services Act 1993 National Disability Standards Equal Opportunity Act (SA) 1984 Privacy Act 1988 Health and Community Services Rights Charter (HCSRC)</p>

<p>Approved: 6th July 2022</p>	
<p>Name: Deb Bates – Hut Executive Officer</p>	
<p>Signed:</p>	<p>Date: 7th July 2022</p>

<p>Date Approved by: Deb Bates 6th July 2022</p>	<p>Next Review Date: 6th July 2025</p>
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